DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 376 329 CE 067 622

TITLE	Collaborative Learning: An Alternative Approach to Adult Literacy Instruction.
INSTITUTION	Philadelphia Mayor's Commission on Literacy, PA.
SPONS AGENCY	Pennsylvania State Dept. of Education, Harrisburg. Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education.
PUB DATE	94
CONTRACT	98-4032
NOTE	72p.; For a related final report, see CE 067 623.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; Case Studies; Check Lists; *Cooperative Learning; *Group Activities; *Group Dynamics; *Literacy Education; Records (Forms); *Small Group Instruction; Urban Areas; Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS	353 Project; *Pennsylvania (Philadelphia)

ABSTRACT

This guide, which is intended to assist literacy practitioners interested in establishing collaborative learning (CL) groups, outlines a collaborative learning approach that was developed during a project to coordinate citywide adult literacy efforts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Discussed in the guide's eight sections are the following topics: characteristics of CL, participants in CL, the process of forming a CL group, ways of generating group themes and a participatory curriculum, strategies for keeping a CL group going, characteristics of a CL group lesson, use of CL techniques with the "Gateway: Paths to Adult Learning" assessment and instruction resource for tutors and learners, and guidelines for determining how long a CL group should work together. Each section contains theoretical information and step-by-step guidelines pertaining to the section topic. In addition, a total of 10 case studies (referred to as scenarios) are presented throughout the guide. Appended are forms/checklists for use in conducting the following activities: intake interviews, goal setting, action plan development, ongoing assessment, and end-of-cycle evaluation. Contains 21 references. (MN)

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Collaborative Learning

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An Alternative Approach

to Adult Literacy Instruction

Collaborative Learning

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This manual was made possible by grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education, through a Section 353 grant.

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Preface

The Mayor's Commission on Literacy (MCOL) in Philadelphia coordinates city wide efforts for adults in need of basic skills. The MCOL enhances existing literacy efforts so that more adults have opportunities to acquire skills through adult basic education, G.E.D., and English as a second language programs. The work of the MCOL is a public/private endeavor; funds are raised to provide information and referral with a 24-hour information and referral hotline (215-875-6600), technical assistance, books, training, staff development and enhanced public awareness of the issue of adult literacy.

This manual has been prepared for the use of literacy practitioners interested in establishing collaborative learning groups at their sites. It was produced as part of a Pennsylvania Department of Education Section 353 grant for 1993-94. The project, entitled "Collaborative Learning: A Key to Empowerment and Participation in the 1990's," has three objectives. The first is to develop a collaborative learning group training for volunteer tutors in Philadelphia. The trainings will take place over twelve hours and will inform and instruct adult educators in the methods and underlying philosophy of collaborative learning. The second objective is to design a manual which would accompany the training and would explain the theoretical basis and some of the step-by-step details of working with a collaborative learning group. The final objective is to establish a collaborative learning group mentoring project in which six of the trained tutors will read relevant materials and closely study the effects of collaborative learning on a group of learners. Further information about any aspect of this project may be obtained from the MCOL by calling 215-685-6602.

The Commission sees collaborative learning as an opportunity to develop new and more egalitarian relationships between teachers/tutors/facilitators and learners and as a chance to foster democratic planning, decision making, and responsibility among all participants. We invite your active participation and we welcome any comments or suggestions toward making collaborative learning work more effectively.

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Executive Director

Acknowledgments

This manual and the accompanying collaborative learning group training are the result of three years of effort by a group of educators and administrators who saw collaborative learning as an exciting and innovative approach to adult education and a necessary alternative to the traditional means of providing instruction for adult learners.

The manual was produced by the Mayor's Commission on Literacy in Philadelphia. The MCOL is also grateful to the three Philadelphia educators who wrote this manual. Richard Drucker, the Adult Literacy Coordinator for the Community Occupational Readiness Placement Program in Center City; Jean L. Fleschute, the Director of the Community Learning Center in Kensington; and Peggy McGuire, the Director of the Germantown Women's Educational Project in Germantown. These three writers worked collaboratively to produce a manual which will serve as a valuable resource for educators in a variety of adult programs.

The Commission also wishes to acknowledge the efforts of Donna Cooper, the Executive Director of the MCOL, for her guidance and direction on this project and Diane Inverso, MCOL Resource Coordinator, for her work in coordinating the development of this manual, the training sessions on collaborative learning groups, and the mentoring project. The Commission also appreciates the efforts of Jim Landers and Debra Moran of the Commission who formatted this manual and provided editing assistance.

The manual, training sessions, and mentoring project on collaborative learning groups are made possible through a Pennsylvania Department of Education Section 353 grant. The Mayor's Commission on Literacy wishes to extend its appreciation to the Department of Education's Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education for its support of this project.

1. What Is Collaborative Learning?

Scenario 1—

Pat has been a tutor at the local literacy center for two years. During that time she has worked one on one with several individual students. She enjoys tutoring adults. One day her site coordinator asks her if she would like to facilitate a collaborative learning groupfor four or five learners. She is nervous about what will happen and isn't entirely sure how to go about doing it. But she is excited by the challenge. Pat agrees. A few weeks later she attends a facilitator's training for collaborative learning. By the start of the new class cycle she is ready to begin.

Meanwhile, the coordinator is doing intake interviews with the new students. She finds that several learners are interested in entering health care professions once they pass the GED exam. She invites those learners to form a collaborative learning group. Five of them agree to join a group which will meet for three months.

On the first day of classes, the learners meet at their assigned time and Pat is there to greet them. They sit down in a circle and Pat asks them to do paired interviews so they can introduce each other to the group. Once the members have been introduced, Pat talks about the importance of ground rules for a group to work together, and she invites the group to suggest rules. When will they meet? How frequently should they meet and how long should each meeting be? What happens when a member misses a lot of classes?

Pat then opens the discussion to a brainstorm on other good rules that a group can follow in order to learn together. Some responses are that everyone should be on time and not leave early; that group members should show tolerance and respect to each other; that only one person should talk at a time. If Pat feels strongly about a ground rule, she mentions it herself. Pat records all of these ground rules on newsprint, and while the group takes a break Pat hangs the rules in the room as a constant reminder of the group's agreements.

When the group returns, Pat reminds them that this particular group has come together because all of the members a) agreed to try studying in a collaborative learning group and b) have a common interest in finding employment in the health professions once they get their GED. Pat asks them what they know about collaborative learning and also asks if someone in the group would like to take notes on the newsprint this time.

As a participant in this discussion, Pat shares what she knows about collaborative learning and her expectations about how the group will work. The recorder posts this information in the class. Pat points out that this discussion has been one form of collaborative activity and suggests that they try some other collaborative

strategies in the next activity.

Pat asks them to spend a few minutes doing free writing on what it means to be "healthy." Pat provides some prompts such as "How do I feel?" "How do I look?" "How do I act?" "How do other people see me?" Then she asks the group to read out loud what they wrote. Pat records their responses on newsprint. Pat asks them, "What are different kinds of health?" The members of the group then look at the list that they have generated and identify the different kinds of health that they are talking about. (The list might include, for instance, women's health problems, drugs, AIDS, and family nutrition.)

Once the group has identified these health categories, Pat helps them to put each of their responses into the appropriate category. She wants the group to establish a rich, common definition of health as the basis for future discussion, and their responsees are forming that definition. Further, they are learning about definition and classification. Pat tells the group that at the next meeting they will do some reading to further explore this theme.

At the end of the session, Pat says that at the next class, she will meet one on one with each learner to discuss individual learning goals. She then hands out writing journals and explains that part of the group's work is to keep dialogue journals in which members will write their reflections at the end of each class. The learner can reflect on what he or she learned that day, raise questions or concerns about the material, or describe relevant personal experiences. They may also use their journals to write questions and concerns for Pat. She will respond to each of them in writing before the next session. (See page 24 for more on dialogue journals.)

Pat gives them a few minutes to write. They pack up their materials, hand their journals back to Pat, and say their good-byes. The first meeting is over.

Scenario 2—

From the intake information provided by the coordinator, Pat knows that the group members' specific academic needs vary. She decides to spend the second class meeting with them individually to set individual short-term goals.

She sits down first with Ruby and asks her some questions about her interests. When in her life does she use writing and how often? What parts of writing are hard? What parts of writing are easy? What would she like to learn more about? Pat asks Ruby similar questions about reading and math. Out of this discussion Pat and Ruby write down what goals Ruby would like to reach in these areas in the next three months. Pat has a similar meeting with the other members of the group. To conclude the session group members again write in their dialogue journals. After this session Pat gathers workbooks and any other materials that each learner will need to work on individual goals.

At the third meeting, in the first fifteen minutes the group plays hangman to develop spelling and

vocabulary skills as well to refocus them as a group. Then they hold a brief group meeting. Pat asks someone in the group to summarize what they did at their first session (the newsprint with their work from the first meeting is hanging in the room). Pat also asks if anyone would like to read journal entries from the last class or if anyone has any questions or concerns to be shared.

Once these activities are finished, the group breaks up to work on individual academic pursuits. Pat helps each person to start. Jean will be working on multiplication of fractions; Terri wants to study the social studies GED book, etc. They spend an hour on these activities and then take a break. When the group reconvenes they resume their discussion about health. Pat has brought in a short reading from *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. The excerpt is about the most pressing health issues facing Americans. She asks group members to look it over for a few minutes and then she does some prereading exercises. What is the title? What do you think the article is about? What do you think this has to do with what we were talking about in our first meeting?

After this discussion, Pat suggests they read the article out loud together. As they read, Pat asks people to summarize what they have read. Next, she asks them to talk about whether they or anyone they know have experienced any of the health problems discussed. Why are these problems so prevalent in the United States? Where do you think they came from? What effects are they having on people? What can people do about it?

Then Pat writes the following phrase on the board: *The best ways to solve our health care problems are...* She then asks people to finish the sentence in writing with as many ideas as they can come up with. After several minutes Pat asks them to pass in their writing so she can look it over before the next class. Pat passes out the journals, which she has responded to in writing, and asks the learners to make an entry for that day.

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING ARE EVIDENT IN THESE SCENARIOS?

1. **Collaborative learning is participatory.** From the very first activities (i.e., initial interviews, setting ground rules) the learners are immediately active in sharing information and interacting in order to learn. When learners think, talk, and write, the products of these activities are accepted as important knowledge to be shared. This information will become the foundation of further inquiry and reflection. This participation is not mere busy work but encourages reflection, such as when the facilitator poses problems for writing and discussion ("What do you know about collaborative learning?" "What does it mean to you to be healthy?"). The learners' input is re-presented to them by the facilitator for further analysis (i.e., "What kinds of health are you talking about?"). As the learners see their own thoughts become tools for learning, and as the

facilitator takes that information seriously, the learners feel encouraged to participate further.

2. **Collaborative learning is critical learning.** Learners are not assumed to be empty vessels or passive recipients for someone else's knowledge. They are asked to engage in thoughtful inquiry on a topic that interests them (in this case, the issue of health) and to make and examine meaning within that topic. The critical learning process begins as learners look to their own experiences for knowledge and information that is useful outside of themselves. In asking individuals to share their knowledge, we are acting from the assumption that authentic knowledge is constructed by communities, rather than residing in a few select individuals and "passed down" to others.

3. **Collaborative learning is student-centered.** The class activities are based on the interests that learners bring with them rather than on a preplanned syllabus. Further themes emerge as learners continue to talk and write. One of the greatest challenges for the facilitator is to treat everything that happens in the class as text for further learning. One way that Pat does this is by always posting notes from learners' discussions. Student-centered learning implies that learners bring with them existing strategies for learning and that students are capable of directing their own educational processes.

4. **Collaborative learning is based on dialogue**. Learners and the facilitator are engaged in mutual investigation; teaching is a respectful exchange, not a one way lecture. Dialogue encourages the natural tendencies of all participants to be curious, questioning, communicative, and cooperative. Participants benefit from their mutual desire to talk about, learn about, and act upon their world. In this scenario the learners are eager to discuss a subject that they already know a great deal about from their own experience: what it means to be healthy. Talk is rich!

5. **Collaborative learning transforms passivity into involvement.** For the learners there is no more passive "getting by" or keeping quiet in order to survive in school. Learners begin to realize that behaviors which they learned in response to negative school experiences are no longer necessary and are in fact obstacles to authentic learning. Meanwhile, the facilitator no longer needs to be always in control or to have the "last word." The success of the group depends upon shared responsibility for class activities (i.e., brainstorming, discussions, journals).

6. **Collaborative learning is democratic.** The facilitator and the learners start out knowing different things and playing different roles in the group. From the beginning, however, everyone's intervention, criticisms, voices, and themes are taken into account. In this scenario, everyone participates in setting ground

rules for the group. The facilitator can have a decisive voice yet encourage all participants to co-construct the class. For instance, the group is charged with defining collaborative learning for itself, but the facilitator may have some specialized knowledge that other group members do not yet have. In this case Pat feels free to add this information to the discussion.

7. **Collaborative learning develops academic skills.** The whole process of collaborative learning allows for the development of many academic skills (i.e., writing, speaking, reading, critical thinking, analysis, computation, and problem solving). In this scenario the group develops reading comprehension skills and practices critical thinking and writing.

8. **Collaborative learning is activist.** Beyond sharing information, the learning process involves asking why a situation exists and what we can do about it (i.e., What can people do about it?).

9. **Collaborative learning is interdisciplinary.** The facilitator and eventually the learners themselves will need to find appropriate reading materials from many different subject areas depending on what themes emerge from the group. In this scenario, Pat chooses an excerpt from a non-traditional reading text which deals with health issues in a readable and accessible way.

Is collaborative learning a new concept?

Actually, collaborative education has been a key element of a rich international tradition of grassroots movements which stress both individual self-determination and community empowerment. As progressive and participatory adult education its roots go deep: to the schools of experiential and student-centered learning based in the work of the philosopher Dewey, the social psychologist Piaget, the linguist Vygotsky, and the small group theory of Lewin; to the advancement of critical thinking and problem solving as forms of education; to community-based educational practice as articulated by Paolo Freire; and to the people's schools which prepared the front-line workers of this century's labor, women's, and civil rights struggles. Collaborative/participatory learning, then, is not new to the field of adult education, yet it is often seen as a novel approach to adult basic and literacy education, especially insofar as the most common teaching strategies in the Adult Basic Education (ABE) field involve one on one or traditional classroom instruction. While there is general agreement in the field that adult basic/literacy education should be democratic and learner-centered, the vehicles for providing such education rarely support these aims. Our hope is that the tools provided in this manual will help agencies promote democracy and learner participation in their educational programs.

Pragmatic reasons for a collaborative approach

On the most pragmatic level, collaborative learning allows one teacher/facilitator to work with more than one learner at a time. It also increases learner expectations of his or her own responsibility to prepare for and to participate in instructional activities. Further, there is an increasing demand by employers for employees who can work effectively in small groups and think critically to solve problems together. Finally, research at the primary and secondary educational levels reveals that students learn more and learn better through non-competitive, collaborative group work than in classrooms that are highly individualized and competitive. While there has been insufficient testing to confirm it, our assumption here is that the same is true for adults and that collaborative learning is an empowering and effective methodology.

Collaborative learning becomes possible when all participants feel free to share information and experiences, exchange ideas, listen to and challenge each other in order to create knowledge. Therefore, it is crucial that the adult education agency (and each class site within it) establishes an environment that is non-threatening and democratic, that discourages divisive competition, and that insists on mutual respect for the ideas and opinions of all participants. Such an environment may well improve retention among learners who have not thrived in the traditional school setting.

2. Who Is Involved in Collaborative Learning?

Collaborative learning groups (CLGs) affect everyone involved in adult learning programs—learners in the classroom as well as program staff, administrators, board members, families, local communities, and funders. All of these participants in a CLG establish a cooperative process of creating knowledge, sharing information, and developing problem solving strategies. The roles within the CLG differ from traditional educational roles. Community and institutional supporters of CLGs need to recognize the unique participatory and democratic process at work in CLGs. This manual will illustrate some of these differences and suggest how the CLG participants might interact.

Roles of group members

Teacher/tutor/facilitator—

The person who traditionally has been the teacher/tutor assumes the role of facilitator. The facilitator acts as the focal person or mediator for a small group of learners, encouraging the ability of the group members to educate themselves. The facilitator's role changes according to the needs and demands of the group and its members. One certainty, however, is that the role will be complex and often seemingly paradoxical. As learners become more active and confident in their educational activities, the facilitator surrenders complete authority over the learning process and truly becomes a co-learner with other participants. Yet, while facilitators and learners are jointly responsible for establishing a respectful and productive learning environment, the facilitator provides a kind of leadership in the development of the "group culture in which adults can feel free to challenge one another and feel comfortable with being challenged" (Brookfield, 1986). This is a difficult task, but an essential one, and is no more demanding than the task of encouraging the same kind of evolving leadership in the learners themselves.

It is probable that few learners or their facilitators have had the in-school experience of collaborative/participatory learning activities. The facilitator will need to discuss the concept with the learners, develop a group rationale for its use, and offer any further information needed so that the group members will have a common background and framework from which to start their work together.

Facilitators see their roles as a transformation of the traditional teacher stance of authority and transmitter of knowledge. They enter into a process of mutual investigation, relating to group members as informed co-learners. They discover and test ways to share their expertise without negating the attempts of learners to develop their own expertise. Facilitators acknowledge and work through the difficulties of reconciling their perceived responsibility to adequately "prepare" learners to "cover the coursework" with their honest commitment to enabling

learners to learn on their own.

The facilitator plans classes with input from learners about group goals, objectives, and ground rules for interaction. Using this group input, the facilitator can then decide when, and how often, collaborative activities are appropriate; establish open channels of communication with group members, support staff, and administrators; prepare curriculum materials; develop meaningful questions and problems for group work; structure the group and be constantly attentive to the group process/dynamics; and remind the group of their self-defined, expected outcomes.

The facilitator demonstrates these qualities, which are also qualities of any effective group member: competence as a teacher, affection for him- or herself and for other group members, and awareness of the role that he or she has accepted. In summary, some of the roles of the facilitator are:

- resource coordinator
- instructor
- encourager
- counselor
- conflict manager
- team player
- celebrator
- negotiator
- housekeeper

Learners—

Learners are the members in a group who are there to develop basic skills in order to attain a GED, read to children, get jobs, or pursue other goals. As a group member each individual has a responsibility to share his or her own knowledge and expertise with the other members, making certain that those other members have acquired this new information. Similarly, each person has the responsibility to learn from the expertise and knowledge of the other group members. Individual knowledge becomes shared knowledge. This is a responsibility for the group as well as the individual. As a result of the collaborative process each member empowers him/herself by taking the responsibility for his or her own learning.

Learners, too, develop the competence, affection, and awareness that are important for their productive interaction within the group. Students learn to respect different points of view as well as to accept divergent opinions, engage in discussion and conversation, take on and exercise the authority that has been given up by the facilitator, and develop a sense of responsibility to and shared purpose with the group.

We must remember that the learners, too, will have to experience a "paradigm shift"—a significant difference in the way they see their roles in the classroom. Learners are contributors, problem solvers, and talkers instead of passive observers and note-takers. They expect to prepare and to participate. They are answerable to other group members for attendance and contributions. They collaborate and learn interdependently and think of both themselves and the group as important sources of authority and knowledge.

THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS

Board members—

The practice of collaborative learning will be new to many adult basic education agencies. The support of the governing board of the organization is always needed when a new endeavor is initiated at an agency. Board members need to understand the pragmatic benefits of collaborative learning, but more importantly, they need to embrace the philosophy that drives it—and to want the agency's constituents to be self-directed learners, engaged in their own authentic empowerment as individuals and as communities. The organizational mission that these board members uphold, and the policies that they develop, need to demonstrate the board's commitment to collaborative learning. Some representatives from a CLG can make a presentation to board members in order to raise enthusiasm and support, and board members should be encouraged to visit CLG sites, observe groups in action, and talk to participants about their experiences and accomplishments.

Support staff—

The administrative personnel—the executive director, trainers, coordinators, public relations workers, counselors, job development consultants—need to support collaborative learning in their various crucial roles. The support staff, too, must have an understanding of the philosophy of CLGs and a belief in their efficacy as a productive educational strategy. Staff orientation and training, ongoing staff development, learner assessment and goal setting, and curriculum planning and evaluation activities can be greatly enriched by the same attention to collaboration, participation, and empowerment that we are advocating within the classroom. This coordination of information, philosophy, and ideas among all participants, including support staff, is essential for the success of the collaborative learning process.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT

Families, funders, etc.—

All external contacts can be made aware of how collaborative learning works, why it is important and productive, and how it is affecting the agency or the person with whom the contact is associated. This can be done via a report, newsletter, letter, open house, town meeting, recognition ceremony, etc. Communication and feedback are continually needed—the more external supporters understand about the collaborative learning process, the more supportive they will be to people who participate in collaborative learning.

3. How Do You Form a Collaborative Learning Group?

There are several ways to form a collaborative learning group (CLG). The most common approach is to ask individual learners if they would like to become members of a group. This can be done during the initial interview or assessment. Additionally, during periodic progress evaluations, learners can be asked if they would like to join a group.

Initial Assessment

Collaborative learning is based on a learner-centered, student participatory philosophy, which needs to be reflected in the assessment process. Assessment is situated in real-life contexts and relevant to what learners already know in their everyday lives. Informal assessment is supportive and focuses on each learner's strengths. Assessment attempts to take into account the complexity and richness of adult life and to offset the prior negative school experiences that many learners bring to adult basic education programs. Thus informal, alternative, and authentic assessment is primarily used in addition to standardized testing. Much of the following information on initial assessment and evaluation is adapted from Auerbach (1990) and Lytle, et. al. (1986).

Interviewing participants—

The interviewer will seek information about the prospective learner and at the same time evaluate the potential of the learner to work successfully and to participate in a collaborative group. If an organization is unable to conduct an intake interview because of constraints such as time, learners may interview each other in pairs during the third or fourth class session or sooner if it feels appropriate.

An interview is conducted to determine the learner's reasons for attending class or seeking tutoring, his or her educational experiences and beliefs, and other questions which will both provide adequate background knowledge on the learner and at the same time help him or her feel more comfortable about being assessed and about attending the group.

Interview questions may include information about the learner's interests, literacy practices, and skills and perceptions of him- or herself as a learner. They may also focus on the learner's strengths that he or she will bring to the group setting (see Table 1 in Appendix). Interview questions might include the following:

- Learner's interests—What do you like to do in your free time?
- Strengths—What are three things that you do best? Describe a time

when you taught someone how to do something. What languages do you speak?

- Learner's goals—What are three things that you want to learn here?

- Learner's reading interest—Do you like to read? Why? Why not? Do you think you're a good reader? What do you read? When? How often? What is a "good" reader? What can a "good" reader do?

- Learner's writing interest—Do you know someone who is a good writer? What makes him or her a good writer? In what ways is writing difficult? What do you write? When? How often?

- Learner's math interest—What math skills would you like to learn while you are here? When do you use math? Why? How often?

- Personal issues—How do your family/friends feel about your coming to class? Why did you decide to attend classes?

- Work—What kind of work, paid or unpaid, do you do (or have you done)? What kind of work would you like to do?

- Scheduling information—How long will you be able to attend classes? How often? When?

- Educational background—How far did you go in school? What do you think helped or hindered you?

Developing an intake form—

Ask or help the learner to complete an intake form which asks basic information such as address, telephone number, social security number, age, number and ages of children, level of formal education, and major reason for attending the program (see Table 2 in Appendix). Information about the person's reading and writing abilities can often be determined by having the learner complete such a form. Can he or she read the form without assistance? How well does he or she form letters? How well does the learner spell? Can the learner fill out a form according to instructions?

Testing—

Use a short, authentic reading selection (e.g., newspaper, brochure, greeting card, recipe, comic strip) and a brief, authentic writing task, (e.g., shopping list, note to child's teacher, set of directions, phone message) to get an initial idea of a particular learner's abilities. If the learner is able to continue with more difficult tasks, you might ask him or her to read and then discuss or retell a longer selection which is at a reading level that is comfortable for the learner.

If a more difficult writing sample is appropriate, ask the learner to write a complete page of text, (e.g., a reaction to the text just read, a description of his or her goals for the class).

Similarly, you can develop your own math assessments to determine an

individual learner's math abilities. If you must do standardized testing, this informal assessment can be used in conjunction with the math portion of standardized instruments.

Individual goals and self-assessment—

A goals and self-assessment format may be completed by each learner to help identify specific, individual needs and realistic short- and long-term goals (see Table 3 in Appendix). Items on the format might include the following:

Home/Family related—

- help children with homework
- read aloud with children
- read/write recipes

Social/Business related—

- write checks or money orders
- read menus
- learn about the political process

Self—

- read the Bible
- get a driver's license
- read a map

Job Related—

- write a resume
- read want ads

You might want each learner to write out the three short- and long-term goals that he or she most wants to accomplish during participation in the program. The facilitator can work with the learner to develop an action plan to achieve those goals (see Table 4 in Appendix).

USING INITIAL ASSESSMENT TO FORM THE GROUP

Whether your program employs classroom instruction or one-on-one tutoring, we assume that learners come to your site with the immediate goal of developing basic academic skills and often with the further goal of preparing to take the GED exam. CLGs can be formed by examining the results of initial intake activities, specific goal setting, conversations with learners about current interests and future plans, and affirmative responses to willingness to work in groups.

In order to develop CLGs, the facilitator or site coordinator can look at common interests among those who are willing to work in groups. For instance, more than two learners may express an interest in parenting skills, job search, enhancing their children's education, working in the health field, or getting a driver's license. Any of these can become the broad theme of a collaborative learning group, and each will provide many possible topics for reading, writing, critical reflection, and collective analysis (and yes, even math!).

While some organizations are able to form small groups around specific themes, as described above, other centers are constrained to hold classes or tutoring based on a convenient time, day, and location. If you are so constrained, goal setting and theme generating activities can be held with learners during the first few weeks of class.

GROUP SELF-MANAGEMENT

At the first meeting the group establishes the class times and determines other group ground rules. In a collaborative situation learners need to know when the group will meet in order to understand the time commitment that they are making. Further, it is important that group members make a commitment for a definite amount of time in terms of weekly and long-term attendance. This allows participants to arrange their schedules. Many CLGs have demonstrated that two sessions per week held for two to three hours are most effective.

The facilitator encourages learners to see the collaborative group as a regular and continuous process. The facilitator may wish to stress the following points:

- Activities are planned for two or more people
- The group covers a lot of material in each session. The absent learner will have gaps in his or her learning
- The absent learner will miss the homework for the next session so arrangements need to be made ahead of time as to which member of the group can inform this person of the lessons and assignments
- The focus is on a group of learners. If any member of the group is absent, the remaining learners will be affected
- The group sets up ground rules for appropriate behavior, i.e., offering support, showing mutual respect, encouraging one another, being constructive rather than negative

The facilitator secures the learning site, checks the site to ensure that it is properly equipped, maintains attendance records, locates support materials, conducts ongoing assessment, and develops lesson plans as time progresses based on input from the group.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING RECORDS FOR A GROUP

Facilitator's journal—

One method for keeping records is the facilitator's journal. It is an open-ended, organic, flexible record of what goes on in the group, with the individual members and within the facilitator him- or herself. Observations deal with academic progress and affective growth and change. The facilitator may wish to record daily group activities noting learner achievements, changes, reactions, participation, and self reflections. This journal enables the facilitator to note changes that cannot necessarily be captured in traditional reports and record keeping. The journal may be used for assessment, for reflection on teaching practices, for classroom research, and for reporting to funders. A facilitator's journal provides a qualitative record of change, growth, and progress.

Some of the questions that a facilitator's journal may answer include:

- What did I learn about the members, individually or as a group?
- How is the group bonding?
- What did the members get out of today's class?
- What seemed to motivate them? What bored them? What was of issue or concern?
- Who talked? Who was silent? What did people write about in their journals?
- What evidence do I have of progress or change made by individuals and/or the group?
- What will we do next time? Long term?
- What problems or concerns did I see regarding classroom dynamics?
- What was positive about my teaching? What could I have done better?

Attendance forms, test scores, or other necessary records will also be included in the overall documentation of the CLGs work.

4. Ways to Generate Group Themes and Participatory Curricula

Developing participatory curricula

Once learners have been grouped around a broad theme of common interest or according to a mutually convenient time and day, they need to develop a participatory curriculum based on the concerns and issues important to them. The facilitator can invite learners to reflect on and discuss their prior experiences of schooling, and on their real-life uses of reading, writing, and math skills. This process will spark rich conversations. The facilitator would do well to listen carefully for the topics that emerge.

Follow-up writing activities (for instance, in-class journals or dialogue journals) also may yield valuable information about what issues are "on top" for learners during this initial group meeting. The facilitator can draw connections between learner conversations and the group theme(s) and make those connections explicit as they develop. The facilitator may also want to take more direct routes to identifying topics of interest. For instance, the facilitator may ask learners to rank potential topics in order of interest or to interview each other about specific interests within the broad theme of the group.

Other ideas

Another possible way to elicit what is of concern to learners, especially if the collaborative learning group (CLG) has been formed around a mutually convenient time and day rather than around a broad theme, is sentence completion exercises as described in "Talking Shop" (Nash, et. al.).

Sentence completion interviews—

These are exercises which address affective issues (i.e., I feel angry when..., happy when..., confident when..., worried when..., proud when..., depressed when...). Members first write the incomplete sentences on a piece of paper and then pair up with one another and exchange papers. Partner A acts as interviewer and recorder, filling in partner B's responses to the sentences. Then partner B repeats the process for partner A. Using this "interviewing" approach will help to stimulate discussion between partners as well as to contribute to bonding between group members.

After the learners have completed the "interview" and sentence completion activities, the larger group reconvenes. Participants may then read aloud either their own or their partner's responses to the group (the facilitator is always mindful of individuals' privacy and offers members the possibility of not having their papers read aloud to the

group). As each member's paper is read aloud, all participants listen carefully (and may even take notes). What issues, concerns, and topics of interest emerge? The facilitator asks the group to respond to this question or asks "what stands out" from the person's responses. This activity, then, is a kind of "oral coding" of group member input; the facilitator acts as a recorder, noting both what he or she "hears" from the papers read, and the group members' "coding." Through the process of sharing/discussion, a community of learners begins to be established: themes begin to emerge.

Clustering—

Borrowing from Rachel Martin in *Literacy from the Inside Out*, clustering is an activity which helps learners to think about a theme once it's been determined. Each learner writes the theme word in the middle of a piece of paper and draws a circle around it. Then everyone jots down words that come to mind, as ideas growing out of the theme word. Not only does this get individuals thinking about the topic, but it also helps the facilitator understand specifics the learners want to investigate. It is then easier for the facilitator and group members to gather materials for the theme, using the specifics generated by the group as a guide.

DEVELOPING PARTICIPATORY CURRICULA AND GROUP THEMES THROUGH READING AND DISCUSSION

Be aware that often the most powerful, most real issues arise "naturally" out of less directed interaction among group members as they grow more comfortable and more trusting with each other. It is essential that the facilitator pay careful attention even to what may seem the most casual interactions within the group. Listening, drawing out, making connections explicit—these activities allow the facilitator to guide the group toward commonly acceptable topics for collaborative work.

AN EXAMPLE OF CLG THEME GENERATING

SCENARIO 3—

One of the reasons that Pat's group came together was a common interest among the participants in getting a job in the healthcare professions once they got their GED. During the first two to three weeks of classes, Pat asks these learners to write and talk about their prior school experiences and how those experiences did or did not prepare them for the job market. They talk about prior employment and how they used reading, writing, and math skills on the job. (If they have not been employed outside their homes, they talk about how they have successfully used reading, writing and math in their "work" inside the home. This in itself will spark a lot of conversation.)

Pat brings in a poem or short story that focuses on school or work

experiences for learners to read, write reactions to, and discuss. Then, learners reflect together on all the information that they have gathered—from their own experience, from each other, from reading and writing.

Pat pays attention to the specific issues/concerns that are reoccurring in these activities and points them out (if the learners have not already done so). Finally, the learners analyze the process that they have engaged in, with guidance from Pat, and decide upon which of the emerging topics they would like to pursue first.

Perhaps all of the learners have agreed that writing a resume is difficult when they have no prior "work experience," yet they know that resumes are essential in their job search. Pat will point out this commonly held concern and suggest that the group work on resumes, but with a particular focus on translating life experience into "work experience."

Further, Pat may develop many discrete reading and writing activities within this project, according to needs that have been identified in various stages of assessment (sentences or non-sentences, vocabulary development, verb forms and usage, etc.), all of which will directly affect people's ability to write a successful resume.

Or perhaps the group members worry about making a good impression during job interviews, especially because they get nervous and they already feel insecure about their ability to speak well. Pat might suggest that the group members write mock interviews and then role play using their own text. In the collaborative process of writing the interview, the learners will have many opportunities to work on discrete reading and writing skills, as well as to utilize their prior knowledge of what a job interview is like. Of course, the role play itself will be instructive. Moreover it may even be fun.

5. How Do You Keep a Collaborative Learning Group Going?

We are all members of natural or "intentional" groups—families, circles of friends, clubs, church congregations, or neighborhood organizations. We are constantly negotiating about how to interact with other members of a given group in order to meet some common goal. Yet we rarely sit back and think about how the group works—how individuals with diverse styles and needs manage to move forward together when they perceive themselves to share a mutual interest.

We don't necessarily even examine our own behavior in groups, since it is easy to assume that we will simply "fit in" if the group meets our needs. Indeed, when a group feels that it has a clear and driving goal for its existence, it may work quite effectively towards its goals without any serious self-reflection—for a while.

Inevitably, though, a time comes when conflict will force the group to look at the dynamics of its relationships and interactions if members wish to continue working together. The alternative—to deny or avoid facing the conflict and to refuse to engage in the sometimes painful reflection that the conflict demands—will surely have a negative impact on the effectiveness of the group's efforts. Before discussing conflict management, an examination of the tenets of group dynamics is necessary.

Group Dynamics

The behavior of people in groups is complex and fascinating, and the potential of groups to effect change is huge when they function effectively. It is imperative, therefore, to pay careful attention from the beginning both to how individuals within a group behave and to how those individuals interact with each other under various circumstances.

A collaborative learning group (CLG) is an "intentional" group (i.e., its members choose to come together to meet a shared need). In adult basic/literacy education, all members of a CLG wish to develop basic academic skills in order to meet a variety of educational and social/family/community goals. A crucial role of the group facilitator is to take leadership early in the life of the group in helping the group to articulate its short-term learning goals. This activity will help give purpose and focus to the group, as well as set a precedent for the shared reflection and decision making that will characterize the group's work together. There are additional activities, however, that may promote productive and satisfying group learning experiences.

Promoting group experiences—

First of all, if the teacher/tutor/facilitator has an opportunity to attend a workshop focusing specifically on group dynamics, DO IT! You will learn much about yourself and your behavior in groups that will be invaluable as you take on the various roles of facilitator of collaborative learning. The facilitator needs to plan activities for the group that will develop three key characteristics, in his or herself and in the other members of the group:

Awareness—

Each member needs to be aware of how he or she responds to group activities and how other members of the group respond. Who talks? Who doesn't? What are people doing when they are not talking? Who needs quiet? Who just likes to listen? Is anyone feeling left out? Is someone confused but afraid to say so? Is everybody getting what they need?

Competence—

All members of the group need to feel that they are capable of learning and of directing learning activities toward their needs. They also need to know that other members share this competence and that information and resources are available to all within the group setting.

Affection—

In order for a group to learn well together, the members must respect and feel comfortable with each other. They must be able to trust that they are all there to learn and therefore no one will try to belittle or hurt another group member. They need to like each other!

Group building activities—

Here are some suggestions for activities that can help a CLG systematically and intentionally developing healthy interactions to enhance learning.

1. Pair up! In the early stages of a group in which members don't already know each other, it is crucial for people to start "connecting" as quickly as possible. Paired interviews are a great way to get people talking to each other, to elicit a lot of valuable information about participants, and to make sure that each person has at least one "buddy" at the beginning. Repeat the exercise a few times during subsequent group meetings, changing the topic of the interview and the pairings, and soon everyone will be having interesting conversations with everyone else.

2. Suggest a variety of ways for people to express themselves. Some people feel immediately comfortable speaking in groups, but others don't. Along with the interview technique, try journal writing/reading, "dialogue" journals, role playing, even drawing or collage making that the artists can then explain to others if they like. The more acceptance members feel of their individual styles of learning and

expression, the more likely their comfort with group interaction will grow.

3. Have a group discussion about "ground rules." If the group members are allowed to decide what the rules are, they will be more invested in obeying them—and "peer pressure" is a great means of management! Ask the group members to decide what works best when they are discussing an issue, writing on a topic, or reading aloud. How long should breaks be, and how do we make sure to get back to work promptly? What do we do if people come late, or leave early, or are often absent? This discussion of "ground rules" should be revisited regularly, both as a reminder and as an opportunity for the group to change rules if they are not working to members' satisfaction.

4. Build in numerous opportunities for members to reflect on and evaluate both their own participation and how the group is going. End-of-class journal writing, questionnaires, personal sharing and discussion, group celebrations, and more interviews are all useful strategies for gathering and examining group input.

PROMOTING COLLABORATIVE LEARNING—REDUCING CONFLICT

CLGs will inevitably experience conflicts that can be potentially constructive or destructive for the group. Many psychologists and sociologists believe that conflict in groups tends to be of two kinds: conflicts which relate to the tasks group members attempt to accomplish, and conflicts involving socioeconomic or interpersonal relations. Conflicts can also relate to individuals' values, beliefs, and the resources they have available for use.

We suggest that facilitators manage group conflict by asking members to become careful observers and listeners of one another and to ask themselves, "How am I coming across to another person?" (including the facilitator). The facilitator must also encourage group members to see their differences as a source of strength rather than a cause for divisiveness. When two people are different, one is not necessarily better than the other.

We can manage conflict fairly if we first learn to recognize why others are frustrated or have different perspectives from our own. Managing conflict calls for an understanding and a tolerance of the needs and experiences of others. As the learning process begins, group members inevitably express emotion, especially anger and/or frustration. Conflict is normal, healthy, and necessary if the group is to progress. The facilitator and the group members should try to handle conflict in a constructive way, not to eliminate it.

For the facilitator, assessing a conflict situation means not blowing his or her cool and trying to dominate the situation. Often group members can help to mediate conflicts and to work toward their resolution. When group members share in the resolution of a conflict, such an experience can preserve and enhance the group process. We suggest that facilitators review the group members' positive attitudes about conflict and decide with the group how to deal with conflicts as they arise. The group may decide that it wants to develop a list with resolutions for possible conflict situations. The group can thus coordinate and manage itself and continue to move ahead (Association for Community Based Education, 1988).

Most important, the facilitator should realize that learners are doing something very new for them—assuming responsibility for their own learning. The transfer of authority from the facilitator to the learners is often equally hard for the facilitator and the learners to accept. The facilitator can redirect conflict by the way he or she responds to group members.

The facilitator's response should never deny the learner's feelings. If a learner comments, "I hate the work I have to do," the facilitator's response might be, "You sound angry about your work. What do you think needs to happen about your work?"

As interaction among learners becomes more open and flexible, learning increases. However, if discussion between learners gets too involved, the facilitator can intervene. He or she can help resolve conflict among members by saying, "We certainly have strong feelings here. What kind of information do we need before the rest of us can make up our minds?" Members of a group are not going to agree every time—everyone has a right to an opinion. In a CLG one goal is to have people learn to acknowledge other opinions, to accept differences.

The facilitator can also prevent unnecessary conflict by being careful about phrasing certain topics. Often the topic is not the problem, but the way it is phrased to the audience who hears it. In a discussion about "babies who have babies," members of the group who may have left school at age sixteen to have a baby might feel offended about such an introduction to a topic. So please be careful about your language.

Stimulating Critical Reflection and Discussion

How a CLG begins will have a strong impact on the extent to which participants will later engage in critical reflection and discussion as a natural and expected part of their work together. If the intake/assessment process allows learners to examine their own strengths and interests, if group members are authentically involved in developing group goals and themes, if from the beginning an environment has been established which encourages and supports a shift from traditional teacher and student roles in the educational

process—if all this groundwork has been laid, it is much more likely that participants will engage in the "common inquiry" that is essential to collaborative learning.

Common inquiry, an example

Scenario 4—

Pat's group is formed around a mutual interest in the health care professions, and the members want to integrate this interest with their need to develop basic reading and writing skills. In the last few classes the conversation shifted to their concerns about their children's health, in particular the issue of what their children are eating and whether it is good for them. Terri mentions that she feels frustrated by how little control she has over what her children are served in their school lunches. Chris remembers reading an article in a magazine about school lunch programs and offers to bring it in. The group agrees to read and discuss the article.

The group can engage in prereading activities—studying the headline, "skimming" the text, trying to guess at the topic and main points of the article, and polling members to find out what they already know about the subject. Then they can read together either aloud or silently, individually or as a group.

Discussion can begin with basic comprehension questions: What's going on here? Who is writing, and who is being written about? How do you know? Pat can now summarize what information the group has gathered so far from prereading and reading comprehension activities.

At this point the group is ready to move to the next level: to critical reflection and discussion. What questions we ask here make the difference. What does this have to do with me, with my life, and with my children? How does my experience compare to what I am reading? If my experience leads me to different conclusions than the writer's, why is that? If I agree with the writer, why? And if my experience is different from that of other group members, what can we learn from each other? What experiences have we had in common, and what can we learn from them?

From the ensuing discussion, a rich body of shared knowledge is generated, and Pat or someone else from the group can write it all down on posted newsprint so that the group members can keep track of the work that they are doing.

Toward the end of this session, Pat will need to summarize what the group has accomplished so far and ask the group to make some decisions about "next steps." Have we finished this discussion, or do we need to continue it in our next class? If we decide to continue, what will be the main points that we want to discuss next time? Do we need more information on the subject? If so, what kind of information are we looking for, and where might we find it?

Perhaps the group wants to know more specifics about recent laws concerning school lunch programs, or they might want to focus on local schools to obtain information on who develops lunch menus and how that person decides what gets served. Some members volunteer to find the information that the group wants. The session ends with learners writing in their class journals about their work during this session—how did it go? What did I learn? What questions do I still have?

This admittedly broad scenario can be refined and adapted to almost any group and almost any shared interest that the group decides to pursue. It allows for specific academic activities—prereading and reading comprehension practice, writing—while also framing "discussion" as an opportunity for learners to see their own ideas and prior experience as valuable sources of knowledge to be shared.

The CLG here is empowered to identify critical issues, study available information, analyze it in light of their collective knowledge, draw conclusions, and decide upon next steps. This is the very essence of critical thinking/reflection that is fundamental to authentic learning.

Granted, the process in action will rarely be simple or easy to negotiate; it will take time for participants to feel comfortable enough to be fully engaged, and the facilitator will need to take a greater degree of leadership (choosing appropriate readings, guiding discussion) in the earlier stages until other members feel able to share that leadership. But a commitment to the collaborative process will yield rich results as the group discovers its own potential over time. Critical reflection allows the group members to carry their activities back to situations in the family and in their communities.

Ongoing Assessment

To be most effective, evaluation and assessment should be ongoing and systematic. There should be many opportunities for collection of feedback. Further, evaluation and assessment are driven by learner needs, progress, interests, and changes in individual and/or group goals. These same considerations will determine any necessary alterations in curriculum design, materials selection, teaching, lesson planning, and placement. But neither the facilitator nor the organization should make any decisions independently.

For collaborative learning to be truly effective, it must be participatory at all levels: learners must be involved in evaluation as they are involved in setting the curriculum, choosing the materials, and determining the themes and topics to be covered. As with the initial assessment, parts of the following were adapted from Auerbach (1990) and Lytle, et. al. (1986).

Frequent questionnaires asking for feedback about the program and self-assessment of academic progress and affective growth may be completed by

the learners (see Table 5 in Appendix). Questions might pertain to teaching, materials, lessons, the facilities, child care, volunteers, etc. Examples of questions might include the following:

- The best lesson we had recently was...
- The most important thing I learned recently was...
- Changes I would make in the child care offered here are...
- Recently, I didn't like it when...
- To make our class better I would...
- My learning plans and goals for the next month are...

A survey format may be used for asking for learner input about class structure, lessons, and activities. For example, information you gather might include some of the following:

Class time spent on writing should be (circle one):

- more
- less
- about the same

Class time for individual work should be (circle one):

- more
- less
- about the same

Writing activities I want to include in our lessons are (circle three choices):

- sentence improvement
- paragraph development
- essay writing
- grammar/punctuation
- autobiography

Other ongoing assessment might include some of the following activities:

Periodic review—Periodic review and updating of learner goals is important. Self-assessment can be done using the initial instrument.

Discussion—It is important to discuss regularly whether the current work is meeting group needs. Does the group want to move on to a new topic?

Dialogue journals—Dialogue journals are essentially ongoing written conversations between two people: here the learner and the facilitator. The learner generates writing and the facilitator responds. The focus of the journal is communication rather than form; the facilitator responds only to the content of the writing, not the mechanics. Instead of making corrections, the facilitator makes comments, offers observations and opinions, and asks and answers questions.

Dialogue journals may serve several needs or be kept for any number of purposes, which the group may determine: learners and facilitators get to know each other better, the facilitator receives meaningful feedback about the class, and each learner becomes

involved in meaningful reading and writing. Depending on the purpose, or purposes, of the journal, learners may write about their lives, their feelings, their affective growth, their reflections about their learning, their academic progress, or their reactions to class lessons and activities. How often the facilitator reads and responds to each learner's writing may be determined by the group, but the more frequently, the better. Alternatively, learners may wish to keep dialogue journals between or among themselves.

Facilitator's/teacher's journal—Assessment would be incomplete without the facilitator's self-reflection on what is going on in the group. This journal is a way to record patterns in activities, changes in those patterns, and changes within the group and the individual learners. Since the facilitator is a co-learner and is therefore changing and growing along with the other learners, this journal also serves as a place for the facilitator to reflect on his or her own practice and growth within the classroom. Further description of the facilitator's/teacher's journal is included under record keeping (see pages 13-14).

Posted journal—Using a large piece of newsprint or tag board, a posted journal could be created to record learners' accomplishments both inside and outside the class. The posted journal can be hung in the meeting room so members can make periodic additions which they wish to share with the group.

Portfolios—Portfolios may be kept by each learner and include all assignments and work completed by the individual. The portfolio serves as a record of student work and progress, and may be reviewed periodically by both the learner and facilitator for assessment purposes. *it belongs to me, a guide to portfolio assessment in adult education programs* by Dr. Hanna Arlene Fingeret is an accessible and practical handbook for adult-oriented portfolio assessment. Portfolios shift power to the learner and create a shared responsibility for assessment between learner and facilitator.

Group discussion—Group discussions may take place periodically to determine if the goals of the group and the individuals are being met and to discuss other aspects of the group as needed. Some record (notes, audio tapes, transcripts) should be kept to document the learning that emerges from this discussion.

Learners' progress sheets—Learners' progress sheets are completed periodically by the facilitator as a check of learners' work, progress and changes made, recommendations for future assignments, and anything else of note.

6. What Does a Collaborative Learning Group Lesson Look Like?

A Lesson

Scenario 5

Pat's group has been meeting for several weeks now. Their specific academic needs vary, so the group members have set various individual short-term goals. As a group they have decided to focus on a couple of potential career opportunities in the health care field and to gather information about education requirements, employment possibilities, working conditions, salary, and benefits.

Group building activity—

During the first fifteen minutes, the group plays a word game or works with some sort of "brain teaser"—an activity that focuses them as a group and also yields a specific academic benefit. Then they hold a brief group meeting. Someone summarizes what they did at their last meeting and what they have decided to pursue today. Perhaps they read to each other the class journal entries that they wrote at the end of their last meeting to remind themselves and each other of progress made and new questions raised.

Someone notes that one group member is missing and has now missed two consecutive meetings. According to a prior group decision, another member volunteers to call that person to make sure everything is OK and to fill her or him in on what happened in class.

Individual time—

Now the group "breaks up" to work on individual academic pursuits. Pat will visit with each member to offer assistance, if needed, and to keep a record (perhaps on index cards) of the progress that the learner is making on self-identified tasks. Sandy is writing a short essay on career goals, Jean is practicing multiplication of fractions, and Terri is studying for the social studies section of the GED exam.

Some learners may need more intensive assistance today than others, but Pat makes sure to "touch base" with everyone. It may occur that Chris and Terri have identified the same need, so they decide to use their individual time to work together. Or, it may become apparent (through other group learning activities) that all members of the group are having trouble with some task—fractions, semicolon usage, inferences—so today some of the "individual time" might be used for a group mini-lesson on that task. It is important that this time be as flexible as possible to meet as many individual needs as possible. After about an hour, the group takes a short break to chat, to stretch, or to have some refreshments (never underestimate the importance of break time to promote group bonding!).

Group work—

When members reconvene, they begin their group activity for the day. At their last meeting, they had agreed to begin by looking at the overall requirements of two specific health care jobs: registered nurse and x-ray technician. Pat had told them about the career search services available to them at the Free Library, so Jean volunteered to get a computer printout from the library which offers detailed descriptions of each of these jobs.

They begin with the information on "Registered Nurse." They engage in prereading: skimming the text, guessing at its main points, and sharing what they already know about the profession. Then they carefully read the text of the printout (how they do this depends on group ground rules previously decided upon—do they read silently, or aloud? Does everyone have to read aloud, or just those who want to do so that day?).

Following the reading, the group members discuss and summarize what they have read, check out any vocabulary problems or confusion about meaning, and then list on posted newsprint what they now know about the profession. After reviewing this list, the group members begin to brainstorm about what else they need to know and what further questions they have. Again, how this discussion is conducted will depend on the ground rules the group has set. How do we make sure that everybody has a chance to participate? Who leads the discussion? Does everyone have to talk, or just those who feel like it today? Who takes notes or writes on the newsprint?

Next steps—

Finally, the group talks about next steps. How will we get the additional information that we want? Is there specific written information that we should find and read together? Does someone know a working registered nurse who might come in and talk to us about his or her job? Should we visit a local clinic and speak to a nurse there? Or should we write a letter to the nursing department of a local hospital to ask for job information? How about writing to a local university to inquire about its nursing degree program?

The group members decide on their next step and who will do what to get there. Before the session ends, participants write in their class journals. They reflect on what they have accomplished that day, both individually and as a group, and they note any questions or concerns that the day's activities have raised for them.

Be aware that groups of motivated learners cannot, or do not, always function within a highly structured schedule. A few members may come in late; the "brief" group meeting may turn into a marathon if some pressing problem or conflict is facing the group. And group work such as that described above may stretch over several group meetings.

We want to keep discussion as focused as possible, but we do not want

to squelch people's struggles to express themselves by "cutting them off" as soon as they stray from the exact topic. We need to keep things moving forward but not at the expense of the learners who are finding their voices. It is crucial to continually search for balance—and to be willing to abandon the best-laid lesson plan now and then. Collaborative learning is based on the principle that a group of self-directed, motivated learners in a supportive environment will govern themselves and make consistent progress toward their educational goals.

QUESTIONING THE PROCESS

SCENARIO 6

Here is an excerpt from Pat's teaching journal (week six): "Today my learners seemed to enjoy brainstorming on health issues in their neighborhood. The one big thing they kept talking about is AIDS. The group consensus was that they want to talk more about AIDS. They wanted me to bring in materials and articles relating to this subject for our next meeting. But I'm getting sick of this topic! It is all I ever hear about and there are a lot of other relevant health issues that we need to be dealing with.

The way I got around this problem was by asking Sandy, who seems especially interested in the topic, to bring in some articles. So Sandy will meet me before class so that I can photocopy her materials. I realize I somehow have to balance what I want to teach with what my learners say they want to learn. After all, we already lost one member of the group. When I finally was able to reach her, she said the class was not meeting her needs and she needed more one-on-one attention.

This raises a couple of questions for me. How do I make sure that I am balancing everyone's needs in the group? But also what does talking about AIDS have to do with grammar, or fractions or passing the GED test? Am I doing people a disservice by asking them to work in a group this way? How can I convince them and *myself* the methods they are using will help them to prepare for the exam? I am so tempted to go up to the blackboard and do a traditional lesson."

Here is an excerpt from a learner evaluation form (week six):

3. What do you like best about the group so far? "I really like how the whole group talks and works together. I feel like I can say anything I want and people will listen. It feels good to know that other people have the same problems that I do! There's a lot of support here."

4. What do you like least? "I think the teacher should be leading the class. She knows more than we do. I want it to be more like school. I want to work on the GED. How is what we're doing going to help me pass the test?"

Trying something new is bound to raise questions and concerns. This is especially true when both learners and facilitator have very clear memories of their prior traditional schooling and very few experiences with alternatives. Even in adult education people have a hard time thinking about anything other than one-on-one tutoring or traditional classroom instruction as sound educational methods. Therefore, it is not unusual for both facilitator and learners to feel resistant to and ambivalent about collaborative learning at various points in the process. It is helpful to realize that some facilitators and learners will choose not to continue in the collaborative learning process and will opt for more traditional settings.

Questioning will continue to be an important part of the process for those who continue in the group. These issues will be the focus of a lot of critical reflection, and critical reflection is a part of learning.

What is important is that the ongoing dialogue within the group allows participants to 1) express their doubts and concerns and 2) enrich their understanding of how collaborative learning works. In this way, participants can make informed decisions about what works best for them and can direct their own learning. The very act of discussion enhances this democratic and learner-centered approach to education.

How does the collaborative learning process address the issue of skills?

Many learners and facilitators question how the collaborative learning group process addresses the teaching and learning of academic skills. An important aspect of collaborative instruction is thoughtful discussion and reflection. These are also key components of critical thinking. Such discussion and reflection always have a context; they are not separate, abstract activities. Discussion and reflection lead to, flow out of, and generate reading and writing activities (even math!). Collaborative learning thus integrates, not separates, the acquisition of skills and critical learning. This group process incorporates several skills simultaneously and therefore reflects real life uses of literacy.

Furthermore, some of the class time can be configured to allow individual learners to work on their own academic skills. As the group gets used to working together, they may ask that the facilitator conduct a mini-lesson on a specific skill. (This mini-lesson may look like a traditional lesson.) Also, as members see that they have similar skills they may automatically begin to work in pairs or small groups.

It is important that the learners initiate these activities. They will do so if from the beginning the facilitator has done two fundamental things: 1) respected individual learners' needs to work on specific skills and 2) cultivated an environment that fosters group bonding and trust.

How does collaborative learning address individual learning needs?

What if individual learners have learning needs that cannot be appropriately addressed by group learning activities? There is no requirement that all instructional activities involve the entire group or that they all be collaborative in nature. The facilitator might want to devote some part of each class time to individualized work and to spend some time assisting each learner with whatever reading, writing, or math task is most pressing for that person.

Alternatively, two learners may discover that they have a common need and choose to work as a pair during individual time. The facilitator should encourage individual learners to find their most comfortable grouping and style of learning and keep track (via note cards or some other record) of what each learner is doing. The learners also will record their activities in portfolios and journals so that they can easily look back and reflect on what they have accomplished, as well as plan what further individual learning activities they wish to pursue.

Scenario 7

Sandy especially liked the editorial from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on the impact of AIDS on the African-American family. In class, the group does some prereading activities and reads the article together. Then they talk about the issues that the article raises for them. Pat asks them to write a small piece about how AIDS has affected their families or a family they know.

When the writing is completed the group breaks up into pairs to read their stories to each other. Since several group members are having problems with verbs, before the end of class Pat asks them if it will be OK to use some of the writings for a grammar lesson during the next class. Those who agree give their writings to Pat and she takes them home to prepare a lesson on subject/verb agreement. During the next class Pat conducts a mini-lesson by writing their sentences on the board, asking them to first identify the subjects and verbs, reviewing the rules for subject/verb agreement, and then asking the group to apply these rules to the sentences on the board. At the end of this activity the group members go back to their original pairs and review each other's writing in light of what they have just learned.

7. How to Use Collaborative Learning Techniques with *Gateway: Paths to Adult Learning*

Gateway: Paths to Adult Learning is an assessment and instruction resource for both learners and their tutors. It is an introductory program to help adult learners working with a tutor or as a member of a peer learning group sharpen reading, writing, discussion, and life skills. The collaborative learning approach is one technique agencies may use when offering *Gateway* in their adult education programs.

Gateway is a set of four Paths. Each Path contains a variety of materials and exercises that are appropriate for use in a variety of learning situations. The documents in each Path are suitable for use by individuals, small groups, or classes.

A placement process during the first meeting includes an interview, self-assessment, selection of passages that the learner is comfortable reading, and a chance to write. At the end of this placement the learner chooses a Path that is a comfortable and appropriate entry to the activities of *Gateway*. Collaborative learning groups (CLGs) can be formed after this assessment process, as several learners choose the same path.

Group activities can be easily found in the table of contents of the *Gateway* manual and with the *Gateway* icons. The activities in each Path can be used to suit the needs of learners in the CLG in a variety of ways. Learners may use activities in more than one Path concurrently or go back and forth among Paths, concentrating on particular themes or skills (i.e., job information, family relationships, poetry) thereby making their own unique collaborative learning experience. A key component of the *Gateway* learning experience is the portfolio, in which learners collect documentation of their work and record their reflections upon it.

Forming a *Gateway* CLG—

Let's say that several adult learners at your agency have gone through the first meeting with an individual tutor. Based on the assessment components of that meeting, each learner has been placed into Path C. Before the end of the meeting, these learners have been asked if they would like to work in a small group of learners who also placed into Path C, and they agree. (The tutor may want to indicate this on the "Placement" section of the Self-Assessment Form in the *Gateway* manual.)

It may also be possible to group learners who have been placed into the same Path according to similar interests that emerged during the introductory interview (especially from responses to the question, "What are your goals beyond this program?"). In any case, the learners must be allowed to choose freely to work in a group rather than in a one-on-one setting.

A Gateway lesson
Scenario 8—

At the first group meeting, after paired interviews and introductions, Pat asks members to choose a theme for the group by considering their choices within the Path C text. They may begin by reading together the Table of Contents and deciding on four Activities that look most interesting to them. Because Pat's group is primarily interested in health careers, members may for example choose Activities Two (Medical Information), Four (Newspaper Exercises), Six (Career Development), and Seven (Writing Resumes). (Other groups with different themes may choose other activities.)

Then, either as a full group or in paired teams, the group might preread four units to discover what issues are covered and what kinds of learning activities are involved. Pat puts notes on newsprint to record what the group learns about each activity and reviews those notes so that group members can discuss their options and make a final decision about where to begin.

By the end of the session, the group decides to focus on Activity Two: Medical Information. For their portfolios, learners write a journal entry about what they accomplished that day, how they felt about the process, and what they expect or want to learn about AIDS in the coming sessions.

The reading in this first session will also yield many potential learning activities for later meetings: What is prereading? Why is it important? What are specific reading strategies to use? What is a "table of contents"? What function does it have in a book? Members may decide to write their own table of contents for the unit or theme they chose.

Other questions may include the following: Are there words in this text that we need to look at more closely? What are the topic sentences for each of the paragraphs? Is the main idea stated or implied? The possibilities are great.

In subsequent meetings, the group will follow the activities suggested in Path C, Activity Two. Each member reads, discusses, and writes his or her reaction to the AIDS crisis. The writing can be shared during class sessions or can be posted or wordprocessed for publication. However, Pat makes sure that each session begins with a group meeting so that members can use their portfolios to review what they accomplished in the last meeting, remember their plan for the day, read journals to each other if they like, and deal with any "ground rules" issues if necessary.

This important time in the group not only helps members to focus on learning collaboratively, but also affirms that the portfolio each person is developing is a living and crucial document for ongoing individual and group knowledge. Following the group meeting, learners can work on particular interests or individual skills during "individual time." Then during "group work"

learners reconvene to discuss what they have learned.

In the course of Activity Two, learners share their prior knowledge about AIDS. As a result of sharing their stories, they may construct an oral group history about AIDS, develop vocabulary usage related to the disease, create a mind map on the blackboard (or out of newsprint), or write about their own personal knowledge or experience with the disease. Members of the group can also suggest ways to secure additional information from outside sources, read other documents about AIDS (including Path C, Activity One), or make logistical plans for a group trip to a health care clinic or an AIDS institution.

Next steps—

As the group concludes its work on Activity Two, it is time to think about the next steps. Here it is crucial that Pat has been paying attention to, and reminding the group about, issues that have surfaced during their work together.

Each activity of a *Gateway* Path ends with suggestions for further related activities within *Gateway*. In this particular Activity, the learner is asked to call an AIDS hotline for further information for resources. The group may be interested in pursuing this direction. Or the group may want to pursue other activities they had previewed in their first meeting.

Yet another possibility is that issues will arise out of the group's current work that members would like to pursue further. Perhaps their study of the history of AIDS has raised questions about how Congress or the President allocates tax money for AIDS research and treatment or how the health insurance system works or how much power individual citizens have to make changes in health policy. If the group decides to focus on one of these questions, they will need to discuss specific topics and what kinds of reading materials and learning activities will be appropriate—whether within *Gateway* or from outside resources.

Used in this way, *Gateway* can be a powerful and flexible resource for learning which is collaborative and authentically designed to meet learner-identified goals.

8. How Long Should a Collaborative Learning Group Work Together?

Winding down

Group stages—

As the collaborative process emerges, group members pass through successive stages of development. At the beginning stage, learners can demonstrate a high degree of dependence on the facilitator. As the learning process begins, group members begin to express emotion, especially anger or frustration. Conflict, as mentioned earlier, is normal in every group. The facilitator and the group need to deal with it constructively, not try to eliminate it.

Interaction among learners becomes more open and increases as the group continues. After trust is established and personal feelings are expressed the group enters its most productive stage. In this stage the facilitator becomes the resource supplier, and the group takes on the routine of looking to each other for answers.

Planning the final celebration
Scenario 9—

The group has been meeting for fourteen weeks, and this cycle of meetings is scheduled to end before winter break. The group members decide to spend part of their group time discussing where to go from here. Chris has made an appointment to take the GED test, hopes to pass, and plans to begin Community College in January. Jean has been offered a job which will conflict with the group's meeting schedule. The other participants would like to continue, though Terri may be moving and is uncertain whether she will be available.

Given this information the group needs to focus on two questions. First, do members want some kind of recognition celebration and second, do they want to bring new members into the group starting in the next cycle? They decide to have an awards dinner to celebrate their achievements. They start making plans, and each member takes some responsibility for the preparation.

People are excited about the celebration, but they are feeling a little sad that some members are leaving. They talk about it for a while but they can't reach a clear decision on the issue of new members. Sensing the group's reluctance, Pat invites them to talk about what they are feeling right now. After hearing what they have to say, she acknowledges the difficulty they are having and suggests that this may not be the best time to make this decision. So Sandy proposes that the returning group members set up a time to meet as soon as possible after the awards dinner and be ready to discuss whether or not to accept new members.

Closing the group—

Eventually, the group members, either as separate individuals or collectively, will complete their goals and leave or disband the group. Feedback on progress is constantly occurring. The question of how long a group should work together is difficult. There are obviously external reasons why members leave or groups disband. Academic achievement needs revolve around learning goals. Members may reach their goals and move on.

At times the organizational support for a CLG may change, so that the group cannot continue. Other times members must leave the group because of family or job responsibilities. The saying that change is inevitable certainly applies to collaborative learning groups. How can we plan for the inevitable changes and consequent hard decisions as the group loses its members or its being?

A good rule to follow is that members should be helped to prepare themselves as they or others leave the group. The facilitator can help group members deal with their feelings by allowing the group time to discuss feelings before (if possible) members leave or the group disbands.

Sharing entries from dialogue journals can be a wonderful opportunity to express feelings that the members have experienced over the weeks. It is also a chance to observe the academic and personal growth developed by the members in the group. By encouraging the acceptance of feelings of sadness, anger, or grief, the facilitator can help the group discover and affirm its accomplishments and successes and thus assist group members in the transition from the group elsewhere.

The facilitator can introduce the following questions for group members to reflect on during these closure activities:

- What have you liked best about the last few months in the group?
- What will you miss the most when the group disbands or when you leave the group?

Recognition events—

The facilitator can also work with the group to plan a celebration of group success. Each learner could be featured in stories or poems written and/or presented by group members. Learners can prepare their own materials and use whatever focus their group decides. It is important that the facilitator assist in bringing the group to an end and in recognizing the goings of individual members. Although this is also the time to discuss the beginning of a new topic/theme or a new plan, the facilitator should first acknowledge success and an ending.

End-of-cycle evaluation

(see Table 6 in Appendix)

In many ways, end-of-cycle evaluation is an extension or even repetition of some of the methods used

in ongoing assessment such as portfolio assessment, review of learner goals checklist, and questionnaires about the class. Some differences or additions, however, might include:

Peer interviews—

Learners interview each other, noting what they learned in class, what changes they have made in their learning and in their lives, and what changes they would like to see made in the program itself. Questions might include:

- What are the most important things you learned in this group?
- What can you do now that you couldn't do before you started this group?
- What changes have you made in your personal life or at your job as a result of this group?
- What changes should be made to make the group better?
- Are you becoming more self-confident? If so, write about two things that you now do that you didn't do before that show you're more confident.
- Explain any changes that your friends, family, teacher, or classmates have noticed about you since you started coming to the group.
- Do you read and write more in your everyday life? Explain.

Program evaluation—

Program evaluation should be completed by both learners and staff and should involve all aspects of the program. A questionnaire might include some of the following questions:

- How is the group going?
- What needs are being met?
- What needs are not being met?
- What issues come up in the group most frequently?
- What changes do we need to make in the group?
- How can we improve student retention?
- If we were to receive additional funding, how should the money be spent? What do we need most?
- How can we improve childcare services?
- How can we make better use of volunteers?

Year-end testing using standardized instruments—

Standardized tests can be administered as determined and required by individual programs.

Staff evaluation

Scenario 10—

The facilitator also needs to set evaluable goals for his or her participation in a collaborative learning group. One way to do this is for Pat to write down a self-assessment narrative

in which she will include her understanding of her role as a facilitator in collaborative learning, what she hopes to achieve in the group, and what she needs for her own ongoing professional development. She shares this narrative with her supervisor at the beginning of the cycle.

The supervisor will also have expectations of Pat which will be articulated in the facilitator's job description. The combined information from the self-assessment and job description will form the bases of future staff development and observation and evaluation.

Throughout the cycle the supervisor will observe the group in action. To prepare for this observation Pat can write in her journal as a way to "check in" about how she feels she is doing. She might address some of the following questions:

- What's going especially well?
- What is not going so well?
- What do I want my supervisor to look for when she observes?
- What are my future goals, plans and expectations for myself and the group?
- In what ways have I grown professionally?

Pat shares her writing with her supervisor before any observations are made. The supervisor writes a narrative after the observation responding to Pat's concerns. Pat and her supervisor read and talk together regularly for communication, feedback, and support.

Two important assumptions are relevant to staff assessment. First, staff assessment should be ongoing, qualitative, and focused on improvement rather than judgment. Second, staff assessment of this nature is appropriate for and will be welcomed by any facilitator whether paid or volunteer.

The end-of-cycle evaluation will be conducted using the same model. However, it will also be informed by feedback that comes from learners' evaluations of the group and the program.

Student follow-up—

Comments regarding the program can also be solicited from learners who withdrew early. Questions might include the following:

- How did this program help you?
- What were your goals when you entered the program?
- Which goals did you complete?
- When you came to class, what did you find that you hadn't expected?
- What didn't you find that you expected to find?
- Why did you leave this program?
- How would you make this program better?

Appendix

Tables and Forms

TABLE 1—INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(initial assessment)

Student's Name_____ Date_____

Interviewer's Name_____

Note to the interviewer: This interview may be used in whole or in part.
Note to the student: If you don't want to answer a particular question, skip it or say "pass."

1. What do you like to do in your free time?

2. Name three things that you do best:

3. Describe a time when you taught someone to do something.

4. Are you teaching anyone something now?

5. If you were to take over the class for a day, what would you teach?

6. What languages do you speak? If you speak more than one language, which language(s) do you speak at home?

TABLE 1 - CONTINUED

Page 2 - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (continued)

7. Do you have children? What are their ages? Names? Do you have pictures with you? *(Here the interviewer might like to share his/her own family pictures.)*

8. What grade did you complete in school?

9. How would you describe your school experience?

10. Why did you decide to attend this class?

11. Have you attended other adult classes? Where? When?

12. Do you like to read? Why/Why not?

13. Do you read at home? What do you read? When do you read? Do you read in a language other than English? Which language?

TABLE 1—CONTINUED

Page 3 - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

14. Do you think you are a good reader? Why/Why not?

15. Do you know someone who is a good reader? What makes him/her a good reader?

16. Do you like to write? Why/Why not?

17. Do you write at home? What do you write? When do you write? Do you write in a language other than English? Which language?

18. Do you think you are a good writer? Why/Why not?

19. In what ways is writing difficult?

20. Do you know someone who is a good writer? What makes him/her a good writer?

TABLE 1—CONTINUED

Page 4 - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

21. What do you do when you have trouble reading/writing something?

22. Does anyone help you? Who?

23. Do you enjoy math? Why/Why not?

24. Do you want to study math in this class? If so, what math topics would you like to learn?

25. How do your family and friends feel about your coming to class?

26. In what ways will coming to class be difficult for you?

27. How long will you be able to attend classes?

TABLE 1—CONTINUED

Page 5 - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

28. Do you help your children with their homework? If so, what kinds of things do you help them with? In what ways is it difficult to help them?

29. What kind of work do you do? (Remember that raising a family and caring for a house are work.) Do you like your work? Would you like to do another kind of work? If so, what?

30. Do you do volunteer work (for example, church, school, community)? Describe what you do? What do you like about this work?

31. Is there anything else that you would like to say about yourself?

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TABLE 2—INTAKE DATA

Intake Data

Date _____

Name _____ Soc. Security No. _____

Address _____

_____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Age and Date of Birth _____

Other Members of Your Household _____
Their Ages and Their Relationship To You _____

_____

_____

Present and/or Most Recent Job, With Dates _____

_____

Major Source of Income and Amount Per Week _____

_____

_____

Last Grade of School Completed and Date _____

Any Other Adult Education and/or Job _____
Training Programs, With Dates _____

_____

How Did You Find Out About This Program _____

_____

What is Your Major Reason _____
for Attending Here? _____

_____

What Would You Like to Do After You Complete This Program? _____

_____

Names and Ages of Children Who Need Childcare During Classes _____

_____

Is There Any Way That We Can Reach You If Your Phone is Disconnected?

_____

TABLE 2—CONTINUED

STUDENT INTAKE DATA

PERSONAL INFORMATION Date_____ *month/day/year*

Name_____ Social Security No._____

Address_____ Home Phone_____

Zip Code_____ Age_____ Date of Birth_____ *month/day/year*

Sex: male / female Race _____ Last Grade Completed (1-12) _____
(circle one)

Have you previously attended an adult literacy program? no yes If yes, CLC / other
(circle one) *(circle one)*

How did you hear about our program?_____

Major reason for attending this program_____

HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION *(check one)*::

☐ Head of a single parent household ☐ Dependent member of household

☐ Head/spouse of 2 parent household ☐ Living alone or with friends/relatives

☐ Head or spouse, no dependents ☐ Group quarters

Number of dependents under 18: _____

Will you be using our childcare services? ☐ yes ☐ no

If we are unable to reach you, who should we contact?
(please list someone who does not live in your household):
Name_____

Address_____Zip_____ Phone_____

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION *(check one)*:

☐ Employed ☐ Unemployed/Available for work ☐ Unemployed/Not available for work

Are you receiving public assistance? ☐ yes ☐ no

If yes, which district?_____

Case Worker's Name_____

Check all that apply:

☐ Handicapped ☐ Homeless Adult ☐ Institutionalized

☐ An Immigrant ☐ English as a Second Language ☐ Enrolled in other Federal Training or Education Program *(PIC, etc.)*

☐ Displaced Homemaker *(You have worked in your home taking care of your family, but you wish to do something else now.)*

LEARNER'S GOALS

Name: Date:

Already Accomplished	Goal for this Session	Future Goal	No Interest	Academic Needs	Evaluation and Comments
				Reading:	
				Math:	
				Writing:	
				Specific Subject:	
				Literature & Arts:	
				Math:	
				Social Studies:	
				Science:	
				Writing Skills:	
				Career Options:	
				Fill Out Job Applications:	
				Write a Resume:	
				Read Want Ads:	
				Type/Use Computer:	
				Improve Interview Skills:	

TABLE 3—CONTINUED

Name: Date:

Already Accomplished	Goal for this Session	Future Goal	No Interest	Family Related Needs	Evaluation and Comments
				Fun/Ed. Activities for Children:	
				Discipline/Set Limits with Child:	
				Improve Child's Self-Esteem:	
				Deal with School Sys. for Child:	
				Family Counseling Resources:	
				Alcohol/Drug Treatment Resources:	
				Physical/Sexual/Emotional Abuse Resources:	
				Housing/Utility Bill Resources:	
				Health Care Needs	**Evaluation and Comments**
				Dental:	
				Vision:	
				Gynecological:	
				Pre-natal:	
				Women's Health Care Issues:	
				Increase Ability to Handle Stress:	

Name: Date:

Already Accomplished	Goal for this Session	Future Goal	No Interest	Social/Community Needs	Evaluation and Comments
				Political Issues/Candidates:	
				Register to Vote:	
				Driver's License:	
				Library Card:	
				Economic needs:	
				Budget/Organize Finances:	
				Open/Manage Bank Account:	
				Comparison Shop/Use Coupons:	
				Complete Tax Return:	
				Self-Development Needs:	**Evaluation and Comments**
				Keep Journal:	
				Draw/Paint/Sing:	
				Jog/Swim/Walk/Aerobics:	
				Plant Garden:	
				Read to Reduce Stress:	
				Walks in Park/Countryside:	

TABLE 3—CONTINUED

STUDENT GOALS AND SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST
(initial assessment)

Name:_____ Date_____

Check one:

Already know or do	Want to learn or do more	This doesn't apply to me	HOME/FAMILY-RELATED
☐	☐	☐	Read to children/Talk about books/Listen to them read
☐	☐	☐	Teach children something you're good at (*songs, sports, cooking, etc.*)
☐	☐	☐	Talk to children about what they're doing
☐	☐	☐	Tell children family stories
☐	☐	☐	Take children to public library
☐	☐	☐	Take children to museums, plays, movies
☐	☐	☐	Write stories and poems with children
☐	☐	☐	Teach children songs, numbers, letters
☐	☐	☐	Play games with children
☐	☐	☐	Cook/bake with children
☐	☐	☐	Do special projects with children (not just school-related)
☐	☐	☐	Help children with homework/Check over homework when it's done
☐	☐	☐	Sit with child while they're doing homework
☐	☐	☐	Do your homework while they do theirs
☐	☐	☐	Ask them for help with your homework
☐	☐	☐	Give children a quiet time and place to do homework
☐	☐	☐	Talk to children about school
☐	☐	☐	Read/write notes from/to child's school
☐	☐	☐	Visit children's classroom
☐	☐	☐	Go to school meetings
☐	☐	☐	Go to teacher/school conferences
☐	☐	☐	Read bulletins and notices from school
☐	☐	☐	Read report cards
☐	☐	☐	Respond to teacher's notes
☐	☐	☐	Talk to other parents about school
☐	☐	☐	Talk to teachers when you think there's a problem
☐	☐	☐	Work with other parents/parent group to make necessary changes at school
			SOCIAL/BUSINESS
☐	☐	☐	Read/pay bills
☐	☐	☐	Write checks/money orders
☐	☐	☐	Read/write letters, notes, cards
☐	☐	☐	Read menus
☐	☐	☐	Participate more at religious services and activities
☐	☐	☐	Take part in committees or other meetings or neighborhood/community activities (*i.e., Scouts, block committee, Home and School, union, etc.*)
☐	☐	☐	Participate in political activities (*i.e., voting, work for candidate, read petitions, etc.*)
☐	☐	☐	Learn about the political process in our (*circle those that apply*): city, state, national government
☐	☐	☐	Work to solve problems in my neighborhood and community.
			Name two problems you want to help resolve:
			1._____
			2._____

TABLE 3—CONTINUED

Page 2 - Student Goals and Self-Assessment Checklist
(continued)

Check one:

Already know or do	Want to learn or do more	Doesn't apply to me	
			SELF
☐	☐	☐	Use TV guides
☐	☐	☐	Read newspaper (*articles, ads, sports page, horoscope*) - (specify sections read)
☐	☐	☐	Read magazines
☐	☐	☐	Get a library card
☐	☐	☐	Use library
☐	☐	☐	Read/write directions
☐	☐	☐	Read labels on medicine bottles
☐	☐	☐	Read official papers/documents
☐	☐	☐	Read Bible
☐	☐	☐	Read bus schedule
☐	☐	☐	Read movie schedule
☐	☐	☐	Read books (*mysteries, sports, drama, horror, science fiction, romance, history, religion, child-care, cookbooks, hobbies, interests*)
☐	☐	☐	Read/write poetry or song lyrics
☐	☐	☐	Write a journal, diary
☐	☐	☐	Write story of your life
☐	☐	☐	Read labels, notices, signs and billboards
☐	☐	☐	Read driver's manual/get a license
☐	☐	☐	Read maps
☐	☐	☐	Use dictionary, encyclopedia
☐	☐	☐	Use the phone book
☐	☐	☐	Read/write recipes
			JOB-RELATED
☐	☐	☐	Study/train for particular kind of job: Examples, if helpful: health care, child care, education, computers, service, business, sales, building construction, automotive, law enforcement, law, city work, fashion, other:_____
☐	☐	☐	Fill our forms, job applications, other applications
☐	☐	☐	Write a resume
☐	☐	☐	Read help-wanted ads
☐	☐	☐	Get a better job
☐	☐	☐	Take test for a job (*i.e., Civil Service*)
☐	☐	☐	Get into the Armed Forces
☐	☐	☐	Work for yourself or manage own business
☐	☐	☐	Read employee benefits pamphlet
☐	☐	☐	Read/write names of co-workers
☐	☐	☐	Read/write specific occupational vocabulary
☐	☐	☐	Write supply/inventory lists
☐	☐	☐	Read/write notes from/to co-workers
☐	☐	☐	Take notes at meetings (*i.e., union, staff*)
☐	☐	☐	Write work reports/end of shift logs
☐	☐	☐	Learn how to answer interview questions
☐	☐	☐	Learn how to get along better with boss/co-workers
☐	☐	☐	Learn good job behavior

TABLE 3—CONTINUED

Page 3 - Student Goals and Self-Assessment Checklist
(continued)

Did we miss anything that you're interested in working on?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SHORT-TERM GOALS
What are the three goals you most want to accomplish in the next three to four months (*remember to be realistic.*)

1._____

2._____

3._____

LONG-TERM GOALS
What are the three goals you most want to accomplish during this school year?
(*Again, it is important to be realistic.*)

1._____

2._____

3._____

Many times, people find that they change their minds about what they want to read and write; as your interests and goals change, it's important that you let your teacher know.

TABLE 4—ACTION PLAN

Action Plan

Goal: (what I want to get done) _____

_____

Strategy: (how I'm going to do it)

Step 1: _____

Step 2: _____

Step 3: _____

Resources: (what I need to do it)

Time (when): _____

Money (how much): _____

Other people (who): _____

Outcome: (what happened) _____

_____

Date completed: _____

If unable to complete action plan, what are the problems which are standing in your way. What are possible strategies for dealing with the problem(s)?

Strategy I: _____

_____

_____

Strategy II: _____

_____

_____

TABLE 5—ONGOING ASSESSMENT

Dialogue Journals

The dialogue journals are a good place to start to think about what you've learned during your time at GWEP. Read through your journal before you answer these questions.

1. What do you notice when you read through your journal?

2. What changes do you notice (in what you worked on, what you wrote, how you wrote or anything else)?

Now, take a step back from the journals and think more generally about the class and what you've learned.

3. Were there things you wanted to achieve and didn't? If that happened, why do you think it happened?

4. What have you learned? This might be learning goals that you met or things learned that weren't even originally goals.

5. Do you notice any changes in yourself, in how you feel or how you act, in and out of class?

6. What are your plans for next semester?

TABLE 5—CONTINUED

STUDENT REFLECTION AND SELF-EVALUATION
(on-going evaluation)

Name_____ Date_____

1. The best lesson we had recently was

2. The most important thing I learned recently was

3. I am having difficulty with

4. I would like to know/work on

5. Recently I liked it when

6. Recently I didn't like it when

7. I'm feeling better about

8. My learning and practicing plans for the next month are

TABLE 5—CONTINUED

STUDENT PROGRESS RECORD
(on-going evaluation)

Name_____ Date_____

COMMENTS
(Please comment on any of the following: student's needs, motivation, participation, interests, academic improvement, goals, growth in self-confidence, change in attitude, and anything else of note that indicates growth and change):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE PLANS:

_____

_____

_____

_____

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TABLE 6—END OF CYCLE EVALUATION FORMAT

STUDENT FOLLOW-UP

(for students who left the program early)

Student's Name_____ Date _____

Phone_____ Last Date of Attendance (approximate) _____

1. How did this program help you?

2. What were your goals when you entered the program?

3. Which goals did you complete?

4. Are you still working on your uncompleted goals?

5. How did you usually feel in class?

6. Was the class too easy? Was it too difficult?

TABLE 6—CONTINUED

Page 2 - STUDENT FOLLOW-UP (continued)

7. Do you feel different about yourself as a result of this class? If so, describe how.

8. Why did you leave CLC?

9. In this class, what did you find that you hadn't expected?

10. What didn't you find that you had expected to find?

11. Are you presently enrolled in another program?

12. What changes or additions should be made to make our program better?

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TABLE 6—CONTINUED

PEER INTERVIEW
(end-of-program evaluation)

Name _____ Date_____

1. What are the most important things you learned in this class?

2. What can you do now that you couldn't do before you started this class?

3. What were your goals when you entered the program?

4. Which goals did you complete?

5. Do you feel different about yourself as a result of this class? If so, describe how.

6. What changes have you made in your personal life or at your job as a result of this class?

7. Was the class too easy or too difficult for you?

TABLE 6—(CONTINUED)

Page 2 - PEER INTERVIEW (continued)

8. In this class, what did you find that you hadn't expected?

9. What didn't you find that you had expected to find?

10. What did you like most about this class?

11. What changes or additions should be made to make this class better?

Bibliography

The following references represent materials used by the writers of this manual and pieces which the writers feel would be useful as further reading for practitioners who would like more in-depth information on particular areas of collaborative learning.

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Feedback on This Manual

The Mayor's Commission on Literacy (MCOL) would appreciate knowing how this manual helped you and how we can make future versions more useful. To accomplish this task we have included a manual evaluation form. Please take a few minutes to answer the questions. Thank you!

What section of this manual was most helpful to you? Why?

What section was the least helpful to you? Why?

Describe any additions or changes that you would make to this manual.

How has using this manual changed your view about teaching? About learning in small groups?

What other related resources have you found useful in working with small learning groups?

Send in a lesson plan that you have created as a result of using this manual.

Other comments?

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Return to: **Mayor's Commission on Literacy**
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